

REMARKS

These remarks are in response to the Official Action mailed on October 7, 2004. The Office Action indicated the allowability of claims 15 and 24 and rejected claims 1-14, 16-23, 25, and 26 under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Kawamura et al. (U.S. patent number 5,576,759) in view of Shibata et al. (U.S. patent number 6,011,714), with additional secondary references invoked for some of the dependent claims. Although all of the previously pending claims are believed allowable for the reasons previously given, in order to facilitate the already rather protracted application process, claim 1 is being cancelled and the dependency of other of the device claims are being changed so that, with the exception of previously allowed independent claim 15, all of the pending system claims have previously allowed claim 24 as their base claim; the independent method claim, claim 18, has been amended to contain limitations corresponding to those of claim 24.

More specifically, those claims (claims 2-4, 6, and 25) that formerly depended directly upon now cancelled claim 1 now depend upon previously allowed claim 24. Claim 13 has been cancelled, as such a change would make it in many respects redundant with claim 15. Similarly, to avoid redundant elements and antecedent problems, claim 16 has been cancelled and claim 27 inserted in its place. Consequently, it is respectfully submitted that all of the device claims should now be allowable.

The other pending claims are method claims, with claim 18 as the only independent claims among this group, the others all having claim 18 at their ultimate base claim. Claim 18 has been amended to add limitations similar to those found in the corresponding device claim, claim 24. Therefore, the device claims are now believed allowable for the same reasons given in the Office Action with respect to claims 15 and 24.

For these reasons, claims 2-12, 14, 15, and 17-27 are believed allowable. Reconsideration of claims 2-12, 14, 17-23, 25, and 26, and consideration of claim 27, are respectfully requested and an early indication of their allowability is earnestly solicited.

Respectfully submitted,



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Date

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